

NASB 1977 A Door to Heaven Pt3 A Pre-Game Event in Heaven.
Revelation 4:

1 After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things." 2 Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne. 3 And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance. 4 And around the throne were twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads.

5 And from the throne proceed flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God; 6 and before the throne there was, as it were, a sea of glass like crystal; and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind. 7 And the first creature was like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face like that of a man, and the fourth creature was like a flying eagle. 8 And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say,

" HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, is THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME. "

9 And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

11 " Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will

they existed, and were created.”

We're going to finish chapter 4 this morning, and what a remarkable study this has been together.

We long for home. We ache to be home with our Father. Having left this world behind and transferred our allegiances and loves under the reign and authority of King Jesus, we long for the day when we no longer read impossible attempts at definition, and we see for ourselves the beauty and majesty of this scene in heaven. And we think that day may be coming very soon. That hope sustains us while we wait for a shout from heaven.

Hope is a word we read very often in this book and don't stop to think about the depth of what christian hope is. What exactly do I hope for?

We hope to see these things with **our** eyes. And that hope has been set in place from the earliest writer of scripture. Job states this hope in the age of the patriarchs. Pre patriarch perhaps. We have no way to date Job. But he states our hope very well that we still retain perhaps 5000 years later; Job

19:25 - 27

25 *“And as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives,
And at the last He will take His stand on the earth.*

26 *“Even after my skin is destroyed,
Yet from my flesh I shall see God;*

27 *Whom I myself shall behold,
And whom my eyes shall see and not another.
My heart faints within me.*

Job looked forward to this scene in heaven. Job has been dead so long that nothing of Job's earthly body remains. Dust for many many centuries. And yet these remarkable words of his live on. He will view these things with eyes and a new flesh.

We have this same hope. We will see Him on His throne. We will have physical bodies of flesh. We will have eyes. We will witness our Redeemer take His stand on the earth. That's our hope. Unchanged since Job stated it in pre-history.

Abraham, the patriarch, also had this same hope burning in Him. Jesus witnessed and tells of Abraham's hope in John chapter 8: Jesus talking to the pharisee's, says; 56 *“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.”*

Our longing and our hope is to see what John and Ezekiel saw with their eyes and had no exact words to define.

Last week we made a case for the 24 elders who are missing in Ezekiel's vision but are prominent in John's vision. We said they are representative of the church, in heaven.

So where is Israel then? Is Israel represented somehow in this scene in heaven? What about Israel?

I think Israel is totally represented in this scene and I'm going to do my best to show you that. This is remarkable.

Eschatology is the study of future things. *Eschaton* is the greek word for future things. And *ology* always means studying to understand. We hope to see these things with our eyes. Some day. With glorified bodies and new eyes that can see so much better than these old ones that have challenged me somewhat my entire life.

That hope drives study. Eschatology. We study prophecies, old and new testament. We look by faith into the revelation that unfolds much of the workings of God's plan. And my own eschatology is very much based in rightly dividing these things with Daniel's 70 weeks prophecy of Daniel chapter 9.

70 weeks of years.

Daniel 9:24 “Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city,

- to finish the transgression,
- to make an end of sin,
- to make atonement for iniquity,
- to bring in everlasting righteousness,
- to seal up vision and prophecy, and
- to anoint the most holy place.

Messiah was "cut off" at the end of the 69th week. Then a mystery not seen by the old testament prophets. Israel is set aside but not discarded. The church becomes God's project on earth. God calls worshippers from every people and nation on earth. Grace for all who will receive Jesus as their Lord.

No one saw that. No one knows how long of a parenthesis between Jewish week 69 and Jewish week 70, the church will be in place. Removing the church jump starts that clock. One week of years of jewish history to complete.

We're like a parenthesis in the prophecy. But when Jesus removes the church, God again deals with His people Israel. Every promise to them will be fulfilled. But not without trouble.

The old testament prophets saw a timeframe that they called 'jacob's trouble'. The newer translations all say jacob's distress. I like trouble. The old negro spirituals speak of trouble. Difficulty. It seems more colorful to me. Jacob's trouble.

Listen to Jeremiah chapter 30 to get a taste of this;

4 Now these are the words which the LORD spoke concerning Israel

and concerning Judah,

*5 “For thus says the LORD,
‘I have heard a sound of terror,
Of dread, and there is no peace.*

*6 ‘Ask now, and see,
If a man can give birth. (note: we have people in congress who can't answer this
question)*

*Why do I see every man
With his hands on his loins, as a woman in childbirth?
And why have all faces turned pale?*

*7 ‘Alas! for that day is great,
There is none like it;
And it is the time of Jacob’s trouble,
But he will be saved from it.*

*8 ‘And it shall come about on that day,’ declares the LORD of hosts, ‘that I
will break his yoke from off their neck, and will tear off their bonds; and
strangers shall no longer make them their slaves. 9 ‘But they shall serve the
LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.*

*10 ‘And fear not, O Jacob My servant,’ declares the LORD,
‘And do not be dismayed, O Israel;
For behold, I will save you from afar,
And your offspring from the land of their captivity.
And Jacob shall return, and shall be quiet and at ease,
And no one shall make him afraid.*

*11 ‘For I am with you,’ declares the LORD, ‘to save you;
For I will destroy completely all the nations where I have scattered you,
Only I will not destroy you completely.
But I will chasten you justly,
And will by no means leave you unpunished.’*

After the church departs at the end of chapter 3, this book is about Jacob and his time of distress. Revelation 6 - 19 is about Jacob's trouble.

So, then, where is Jacob in this scene in heaven. I get pretty excited about this symbolism.

6 and before the throne there was, as it were, a sea of glass like crystal; and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind.

These four living creatures, living ones, literally, are the same living ones that Ezekiel saw, albeit from a different perspective. Ezekiel seems to see these cherubim under the sea of crystal as if holding up the throne. John's vision seems to see them surrounding the throne that is sitting on the crystal sea.

R4:7 And the first creature was like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face like that of a man, and the fourth creature was like a flying eagle.

This is the connection with Jacob. Israel. This is a weird connection and I don't propose to fully understand all of the ramifications. I just want to suggest to you that God and Israel have this symbolic history together.

When the Israelites had broken free of their slavery in Egypt, by God's miraculous intervention and deliverance, they're on their way to the land God has promised to them, crossing those deserts and mountains and all of the terrain, and God is in their midst, going with them, a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, when it was time to rest, they would set up camp in an orderly fashion that was given to them to do.

You can read about it in Numbers 2, and 3. So, when they come to where they're going to encamp, over half a million of them, the tent of meeting which is where God was camped with them was in the center. Then the

Israelites would surround Moses and the Aaronic priesthood, and the Levites, and all Israel would set up camp surrounding that center core, by tribes set up by north south east west. Three tribes at the north. Three tribes at the south. Three tribes at the west, and three tribes at the east.

And those three's have one main tribe in the center, and two others along with them. So on the North is Dan in the center of north with Asher flanked at his left and Naphtali flanked at his right. South of the tent is Reuben. Gad is on his left, Simeon on his right. To the west is Ephraim. With Manassah to the north and Benjamin to the south of him. And on the east is Judah. Issachar is to the north of him and Zebulon is to the south.

So God is in the very center, surrounded by these 4 flanks of 3 tribes. And those 4 flanks of 3 tribes each displayed the banner of the center and main tribe. North South East West.

OK, the 4 banners; Dan, north, is an Eagle. Reuben, south, is the man. Ephraim, west, is the Ox, or calf. And Judah, east, is the Lion.

It's no coincidence that God travels through the wilderness in the midst of His people, and camps in the wilderness in the midst of His people with four banners, north south east and west, and those banners have the images of man, calf, lion, and eagle.

God's throne is surrounded with Cherubim that have those 4 faces. And God is preparing for war which will both punish Israel for her disobedience and unfaithfulness but will also fulfil to her every promise.

So in this vision, we have the church in heaven, the 24 elders, but we also have God's ancient connection and protection of Israel with cherubim that are like the 4 banners around God's throne as Israel traveled.

God played out this scene, in real time, as Israel moved towards the promised land, and He shows us the spiritual equivalent, in heaven, as heaven's throne prepares for war. God is on the move, and the eagle, the

man, the calf, and the lion are traveling wherever He goes in this war.

It's almost as if God is on the move in this imagery, and the four protecting cherubs are at their 4 posts around God, and Israel is between the cherubs and God on His throne.

Yes, they're in for a wild ride, but yes, God's elect people will receive every promise He has made to them.

The church, already in heaven, and Israel ready to engage in God's warfare. Or better, God, ready to engage in Israel's warfare. What a scene. How magnificent is our God!

*8 And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say,
“ HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, is THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY,
WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME. ”*

Holy Holy Holy. Thrice Holy is our God. Holy in the past. Holy in the present, and Holy in the future. Thrice Holy as a single One God in three persons. God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, all equally Holy from eternity past to eternity future.

This worship goes up day and night . . . forever. Forever.

Worship. We are fallen creatures. And if you're a boy of 15 looking out the window in school, thinking of adventures, away from that place, or perhaps a boy that never grew up, much, the thought of worshipping God forever and ever has a certain dread mixed in.

And yet, there is something inexplicably exciting connected with the few times I've been a part of a great company of voices singing praises to our God, there's something to that. Your heart feels like it might burst with joy. It's an otherworldly rush. Why?

God designed us, He created us for worship. Our experiences with real worship are hindered here. The bar is set pretty low. We can't help it, it's just the reality while we wait for that call from heaven. But some day. I can only begin to imagine all of heaven worshipping together in unison.

That rush I've felt a very few times multiplied by a million times?

In the first verses of chapter 5, John, our author, bursts into tears. Why? Because he doesn't want this worship to ever stop. We'll look at that next week. The reason for the tears is that worship is interrupted!

You guys keep looking at your watches. *And I don't blame you.* Worship here in these fallen bodies can seem tedious. We're headed for worship that will be so fantastic, you burst into tears when it stops.

9 And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

You folks will have to forgive me for using illustration ideas that are so far beneath what we actually have defined for us here.

This vision of worship in heaven is like the coach in the locker room giving one of those pre-game or mid game Hollywood speeches that gets the team so revved up with the taste of victory they're almost in a frenzy when they leave the room.

Like the movie where the underdog team with the impossible odds from the podunk town nobody ever heard of is about to go for the win. That's what we have going on in this scene. Worship that is so charged with coming victory that it's at a frenzied level.

The four living creatures are giving glory and honor and thanks to God and

the 24 elders (the church) reach frenzy pitch of worship! A great cacophony, a roar of worship in heaven, and the elders, the church cast their crowns before the throne saying . . . what?

11 “ Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed, and were created.”

What's going on here only begins to make sense if you incorporate the Lord's prayer. The thing the church has prayed for continually since Jesus told us to pray it.

Thy Kingdom come! Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

That prayer is about to be answered in cataclysmic war both physical and spiritual. Satan who has usurped that authority to reign and who has ruled the earth in darkness and rebellion against God, is going down.

This worship chant in heaven is about God receiving the glory and honor and power He deserves from His creation. He owns this world that is in rebellion. He's about to come and take it back. All heaven is in frenzied excitement of worship, because God is going to recover the glory and honor and power of His creation.

And what is the reason? What is the claim on this rebellious real estate? Why does God think He has any claim for rule and worship and glory here on earth? What is the basis of His claim that He should be ruler who is obeyed here? On earth?

for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed, and were created.”

It belongs to Him because He created it. He spoke it into existence with the breath of His mouth. He is owner because He is Creator. It has always belonged to Him. Even in usurped rebellion, the ownership never changed.

Even though an evil occupier is on the throne here, temporarily, the title deed still says; God owns this. His creation belongs to Him. And He's coming to retake what is His own.

Think about the battle against Genesis 1 through 11. There is a direct connection between this worship shout in heaven, immediately before Jesus returns and retakes His possession that He created.

If you make Genesis 1 through 11 poetic nonsense that never happened, you wipe out a young earth spoken into existence in 7 24 hour days 6000 years ago, you eliminate the literal truths of that revelation, what you've also done is neutralized this worship shout in heaven.

The very reason that God is in fact returning to and retaking this earth from Satan is because Genesis 1 - 11 is literal truth. God owns this real estate because God created it, ex-nehilo, out of nothing. God spoke all things that are, into existence, by His Word.

So if you neutralize Genesis, you've neutralized Revelation. And if you've done that, you've successfully made this entire book impotent. People who turn Genesis into some kind of poetic mythology are working directly for Satan.

God created it in Genesis, and God owns it, and God will reclaim what is His through cataclysmic catastrophic events described in this book. We believe the Genesis account is literal truth. And we believe the events described in this book of Revelation are literal truth.

This is the pregame roar in heaven. Get ready earth. God is coming to retake what is rightfully His. Fasten your seat belts. It's about to get ugly.

I'm going to shift gears a little bit and make this real. Where are we in this drama?

I believe that we may be so close that people alive in this room could either

experience the darkness and terrors of a world being re-taken by it's rightful owner who will punish and destroy every rebel, or, be part of the worship celebration in heaven before the cataclysmic war begins.

Those are your two choices. Bow the knee then to the King eternal who is about to crush you in the rebellion, or bow the knee to the gracious King, now, who will forgive every sin, and adopt you as brother and son, and you'll be part of the winning team who is with Him on the day He arrives to retake what is rightfully His.

Darkness and light. Evil at war with good. Which army are you in? It seems like such a no brainer to me.

Miss Pam and I got to experience this contrast in a very special way this last week at Sierra Bible Camp.

I've had a small part for several years. I go over on the day they're putting the encampment together and I cobble together a circuit that can run the air conditioning on 5 trailers. That way some of the staff can get some sleep after the 104 degree days. Missionary work is back breaking labor.

The Craig family are like a band of christian gypsies. Complete with a matriarch that hypnotizes you and makes you do what she says.

But what happens in all of that, is that a bunch of little kids that have often grown up in families that are in total darkness get to experience a couple of days of the joy that christians get to experience here on earth. Together.

Fun. Laughter. Learning about Jesus, who actually does love you. A whole different kind of life than they ever knew existed anywhere. They get to see *that* first hand. Many for the first time ever. There is a better life available, with Jesus.

There are options you didn't know were available. They get to witness and experience that for a few magical days. Fun. Really delicious food in a

room full of noisy happy people. And a God who will forgive your sins and welcome you into His family. Magic happens. Magic is a bad word. Miracles happen in that environment which makes the back breaking work totally worth it.

Folks, how exciting is it that this Book is literally unfolding before our eyes. Every word of it is true. It's our job to tell folks.